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APPARATUS AND METHODS FOR  
NETWORKING OMNI-MODAL RADIO  
DEVICES

SP P This application is a Continuation of Ser. No. 08/167, 5  
002, filed Dec. 15, 1993, now abandoned.

SV BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to frequency and protocol  
agile, wireless communication devices and systems adapted 10  
to enable voice and/or data transmission to occur using a  
variety of different radio frequencies, transmission protocols  
and radio infrastructures.

Many communication industry experts believe that a 15  
personal information revolution has begun that will have as  
dramatic an impact as did the rise of personal computers in  
the 1980's. Such experts are predicting that the personal  
computer will become truly "personal" by allowing virtually  
instant access to information anytime or anywhere. There 20  
exists no consensus, however, on the pace or form of this  
revolution.

For example, the wireless communication industry is  
being fragmented by the emergence of a substantial number  
of competing technologies and services including digital 25  
cellular technologies (e.g. TDMA, E-TDMA, narrow band  
CDMA, and broadband CDMA), geopositioning services,  
one way and two-way paging services, packet data services,  
enhanced specialized mobile radio, personal computing  
services, two-way satellite systems, cellular digital packet  
data (CDPD) and others. Fragmenting forces within the 30  
wireless communication industry have been further  
enhanced by regulatory actions of the U.S. government. In  
particular, the U.S. government is preparing to auction off  
portions of the radio spectrum for use in providing personal 35  
communication services (PCS) in a large number of rela-  
tively small contiguous regions of the country. The U.S.  
government is also proposing to adopt regulations which  
will encourage wide latitude among successful bidders for  
the new radio spectrum to adopt innovative wireless tech- 40  
nologies.

Until the market for wireless communication has experi-  
enced an extended "shake-out" period it is unlikely that a  
clear winner or group of winners will become apparent. Any 45  
portable unit which is capable of interacting with more than  
one service provider or radio infrastructure would obviously  
have advantages over a portable unit which is capable of  
accessing only a single service provider. Still better would  
be a portable unit which could be reprogrammed to interact  
with a variety of different service providers. Previous 50  
attempts to provide such multi modal units have produced a  
variety of interesting, but less than ideal, product and  
method concepts.

Among the known multi-modal proposals is a portable  
telephone, disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,127,042 to Gillig et 55  
al., which is adapted to operate with either a conventional  
cordless base station or cellular base station. U.S. Pat. No.  
5,179,360 to Suzuki discloses a cellular telephone which is  
capable of switching between either an analog mode of  
operation or a digital mode of operation. Yet another 60  
approach is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,985,904 to Ogawara  
directed to an improved method and apparatus for switching  
from a failed main radio communication system to a backup  
communication system. Still another proposal is disclosed in  
U.S. Pat. No. 5,122,795 directed to a paging receiver which 65  
is capable of scanning the frequencies of a plurality of radio  
common carriers to detect the broadcast of a paging message

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over one of the carriers serving a given geographic region. In U.S. Pat. No. 5,239,701 to Ishii there is disclosed a radio receiver which is responsive to an RF signal containing a plurality of channel frequencies, each having broadcast information, and a circuit for producing a wide band version of the received RF signal and a circuit for producing a narrow band version of the received RF signal.

While multi-modal in some regard, each of the technologies disclosed in the above listed patents is highly specialized and limited to a specific application. The systems disclosed are clearly non-adaptive and are incapable of being easily reconfigured to adapt to different transmission protocols or different radio infrastructures. Recently, Motorola has announced beta testing of a system called "MoNet" which will allegedly allow users to operate on whatever wireless network happens to be available using protocol and frequency agile radio modems. The MoNet technology will be integrated in both networks and mobile devices and will permit first time users to fill out an electronic application, transmit it, and receive a personal ID to allow the user to operate on any of several mobile networks yet receive just one bill. Another provider of an open system is Racotek of Minneapolis, Minn. which offers client server architecture designed to be portable across different mobile devices, host platforms, and radio infrastructures.

While the limited attempts to deal with the fragmentation of the wireless communication industry have had some merits, no one has yet disclosed a truly self adaptive, omni-modal wireless product which enables an end user to access conveniently various wireless services in accordance with a selection process which is sufficiently under the control of the end user.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A fundamental objective of the subject invention is to overcome the deficiencies of the prior art by providing a truly omni-modal wireless system and method which is adaptive to the selectively variable desires of the end user and is reconfigurable to allow maximum utilization of the total radio frequency spectrum assigned in any given geographic area for wireless communication.

Another more specific object of the subject invention is the provision of multiple portable product in the hands of plural individual users wherein each portable product would be capable of utilizing any one of the wireless data services within a given geographic area based on a user determined criteria such as: (1) the cost of sending a data message, (2) the quality of transmission link (signal strength, interference actual or potential), (3) the potential for being bumped off of the system (is service provider at near full capacity), (4) the security of transmission, (5) any special criteria which the user could variably program into his omni-modal wireless product based on the user's desires or (6) any one or more combinations of the above features that are preprogrammed, changed or overridden by the user.

Another object of the subject invention is to provide plural omni-modal wireless products which would allow for adaptive service provider selection based on user experience with specific service providers.

A more specific object of the subject invention is to provide plural omni-modal wireless products which would have the effect of inducing intense competition for customers among various wireless data service providers based on quality of service and price by allowing the user to easily and conveniently identify the service providers that best meet the user's performance requirements.

Another object of the invention is to provide a network of omni-modal wireless products and service providers which is designed to provide the most business and profit making potential to the service providers who best meet the varying demands of the greatest number of omni-modal wireless product users. 5

Still another objective of the subject invention is to promote and encourage introduction of innovative technology which will satisfy the desires of end users to receive the best possible quality wireless service at the lowest possible cost by promoting real time adaptive price and service competition among cell service providers. 10

Another objective of the subject invention is to allow wireless service providers to broadcast electronically as part of any "handshaking" procedure with a omni-modal wireless product information such as (1) rate information and (2) information regarding system operating characteristics such as percent of system capacity in use and/or likelihood of being dropped. 15

Still another objective of the subject invention is to create a user oriented source enrollment and billing service in the wireless data market by establishing uniform standard for "handshakes" to occur between cell service providers and omni-modal wireless products. 20

A more specific object of this invention is to provide a network of wireless service providers adapted to interact with a population of omni-modal wireless products within a given geographic area in a manner to permit the wireless service providers to "borrow" radio frequencies from other wireless service providers within the same geographic region. As a cellular service provider in a given region finds that one of its service areas or cells has become nearly or fully loaded, frequency could be borrowed from a competitor, such as a PCS provider serving the same region. Selected omni-modal wireless product users in the over-loaded area would be told to switch their omni-modal to the "leased" frequency but to use the non-PCS communications protocol appropriate to the type of service desired by the user. Implementation of this method broadly within a given geographic region will have the effect of insuring that the available radio spectrum is used to its maximum capacity to serve the needs of the wireless users on a real time basis. 25 30 35 40

These objects, and others which will be apparent to those skilled in the art upon review of the specification, are achieved in the present invention by an omni-modal radio circuit implemented by a standard radio computing chip or chipset which can serve as a computer (special or general purpose), or as an interface to a general purpose personal computer. The chip preferably includes a modem and associated processing circuits. So that it can perform at least basic processing functions such as displaying data, accepting input, etc., the chip may also incorporate at least a basic microprocessor. The processor may provide only predetermined functions, accessible through a standard applications programming interface, or in more advanced designs the processor can run other software or firmware added by the product maker. Exemplary processor functions of the chip include radio network interface control (call placement, call answering), voice connection, data transmission, and data input/output. The chip can be used to implement a variety of omni-modal devices and can provide computing resources to operate fundamental communications programs. 45 50 55 60

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 are block schematic diagrams of an omni-modal radio communications circuit according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a block schematic diagram of an advanced cellular telephone implemented using an omni-modal radio communications circuit according to the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a block schematic diagram of a personal  
5 communicator implemented using an omni-modal radio communications circuit according to the present invention;

FIG. 4A is a plan view of the front of a data transmission and display radiotelephone implemented using an omni-compatible radio communications circuit;

10 FIG. 4B is a plan view of the back of a data transmission and display radiotelephone implemented using an omni-compatible radio communications circuit;

FIG. 5 is a block schematic diagram of a telephone/pager  
15 implemented using the present omni-modal radio communications circuit;

FIG. 6A is a block schematic diagram of a dual mode cellular/cordless landline telephone implemented using the present omni-modal radio communications circuit;

20 FIG. 6B is a flowchart showing a method of operation of a dual mode cellular/cordless landline telephone according to the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a block schematic diagram of a personal  
25 computer incorporating an omni-modal radio communications circuit;

FIG. 8 is a block schematic diagram of a special purpose radio data transmitting device implemented using an omni-modal radio communications circuit;

30 FIG. 9 is a flowchart showing a radio system selection method by which information carriers are selected according to varying specified criteria;

FIG. 10 is a flowchart showing a method of broadcasting local carrier information to facilitate carrier selection by  
35 customers for a particular information transmission task;

FIG. 11 is a flowchart showing a handshake sequence for arranging information transmission using the omni-modal device of the present invention;

40 FIG. 12 is a plan view of a modular implementation of the omni-modal radio communications circuit of the present invention installed in a cellular telephone;

FIG. 13 is a plan view of a modular implementation of the omni-modal radio communications circuit of the present  
45 invention installed in a personal computer;

FIG. 14 is a block schematic diagram showing a system for relaying paging signals to the omni-modal device of the present invention using a cellular telephone system; and

50 FIG. 15 is a flowchart showing a method of relaying paging signals to the omni-modal device of the present invention.

#### DE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

55 A preferred embodiment of a standardized radio processing circuit 1 is shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B. The standardized radio processing circuit 1, shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B taken together, may be implemented on a single VLSI chip or on a set of VLSI chips making up a chipset. As will be seen, this  
60 chip or chipset provides a standard building block which can be used to make a plurality of consumer products that provide data transmission capability. As will be seen later with reference to FIGS. 2 through 8, by adding minimal external components to the standardized circuit 1, a wide  
65 variety of products can be produced. Also, as will be seen, the standardized circuit 1 can be advantageously implemented on a removable card with a standardized interface

connector or connectors, so that it can then be selectively inserted into and removed from a variety of devices to provide the devices with radio information transmission capability.

In terms of the preferred functional and operational characteristics of circuit 1, it is particularly significant that this circuit provides a multi-modal or omni-modal communications capability. That is, circuit 1 can be adjusted by the user, or automatically under stored program control, to transfer information over at least two different radio communications networks, and preferably all networks available in a particular area within the frequency range of the transceiver of circuit 1.

Examples of radio communications networks which circuit 1 may be designed to use include commercial paging networks; the U.S. cellular telephone network or Advanced Mobile Phone System (AMPS); alternative cellular telephone network standards such as the European standard; digitally modulated radiotelephone systems operating under various encoding techniques such as TDMA, CDMA, E-TDMA, and BCDMA; Cellular Digital Packet Data (CDPD); Enhanced Specialized Mobile Radio (ESMR); ARDIS; Personal Cellular Systems (PCS); RAM; global positioning systems; FM networks which transmit stock prices or other information on subcarriers; satellite-based networks; cordless landline telephones (such as 49 Mhz and particularly 900 Mhz systems); and wireless LAN systems. Preferably, circuit 1 is also designed to use the landline/public switched telephone network (PSTN).

As another feature, the omni-modal circuit 1 may perform local positioning calculations to accurately determine its location by monitoring precisely synchronized timing signals which may be broadcast by cell sites for this purpose. If such timing signals were provided, the omni-modal circuit 1 could receive the signals, determine the relative time delay in receiving at least three such signals from different transmitter locations, and triangulate to determine the distance of the omni-modal circuit to each of the transmitters. If the omni-modal circuit 1 is installed in a vehicle, this information may be used to determine the location of the vehicle.

As will be seen, for each system which can be accessed by circuit 1, appropriate cross connections are provided between the radio circuit or landline interface, as selected, and voice or data sources and destinations. The appropriate cross connections are established under program control and include conversions between digital and analog signal forms at appropriate points in cases where a signal in one form is to be transmitted using a method for which a different signal form is appropriate. The operating parameters of the transceiver may be optimized by a digital signal processor for either voice or data transmission.

In addition, a library of command, control and data transmission protocols appropriate for each supported system may be included in circuit 1, and the device can implement the correct protocols by consulting a lookup table during transmissions to obtain the data channel protocols appropriate to the system selected. In another embodiment, the library of command, control, and data transmission protocols may be replaced, or supplemented, by information transmitted over the radio frequencies to the device by the carrier, or information downloaded from a hardwired connection to another device. Flash memory, EEPROMs, or non-volatile RAM can be used to store program information, permitting replacement or updating of the operating instructions used by the device.

As examples, the library functions accessible by the device (and also by external devices which may call the

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FIG. 1A shows a block schematic diagram of a preferred embodiment of an omni-modal radio communication radio frequency (RF) circuit. In the example shown, the RF circuit includes antenna 2, diplexer 4, amplifier 6, transmit mixer 8, receiver mixer 10, programmable local oscillator 12, modulation selector switches 14 and 16, analog detector-demodulator 18, digital demodulator 20, analog modulator 22, digital modulator 24, voice grade channel output 26, digital output 28, voice grade channel input 30, and digital input 32.

35 Voice grade channel input 30 is connected to analog modulator 22 and digital input 32 is connected to digital modulator 24. Analog modulator 22 and digital modulator 24 are selectively connected to transmit mixer 8 through switch 16. Transmit mixer 8 is connected to both local  
40 oscillator 12 and amplifier 6. Amplifier 6 is connected to diplexer 4 and diplexer 4 is connected to antenna 2. These components comprise radio frequency transmit circuitry for selective transmission of analog or digitally modulated radio signals.

Diplexer 4 allows antenna 2 to receive broadcast radio signals and to transmit the received signals to the demodulators 18 and 20, and to allow modulated radio signals from modulators 22 and 24 to be transmitted over antenna 2. Diplexer 4 is designed so that signals received from amplifier 6 will be propagated only to antenna 2, while signals received from antenna 2 will only be propagated to receiver mixer 10. Diplexer 4 thus prevents powerful signals from amplifier 6 from overloading and destroying receiver mixer 10 and demodulators 18 and 20.

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input signal from diplexer 4. Receiver mixer 10 also receives a reference frequency from local oscillator 12. Receiver mixer 10 converts the signal received from diplexer 4 to a lower frequency signal and outputs this intermediate frequency on output line 36 to switch 14. Switch 14 is connected through control line 38 to a micro-processor (not shown). Control line 38 selectively controls switch 14 to pass the intermediate frequency signal on output line 36 to either analog detector-demodulator 18 or to digital demodulator 20. This selection is controlled based upon the type of signal currently being received. For example, if the omni-modal circuit 1 is tuned to an analog communication system, switch 14 would be connected to analog detector demodulator 18. If, however, the omni-modal circuit 1 is receiving a digital modulated signal, switch 14 would be in a state to allow an intermediate frequency on output line 36 to be transmitted to digital demodulator 20.

Analog detector demodulator 18 receives analog signals through switch 14 from receiver mixer 10 on output line 36. Analog detector demodulator converts the RF modulated signal received as an intermediate frequency into a voice grade channel or VGC. The voice grade channel may comprise an audio frequency spectrum going from approximately 0 Hz to approximately 4 KHz. Analog detector demodulator 18 is designed for demodulation of analog radio frequency signals. For example, analog detector demodulator would be capable of demodulating a frequency modulated (FM) radio signals. Analog detector demodulator 18 may also be capable of demodulating amplitude modulated (AM) radio signals.

Digital demodulator 20 is designed to demodulate digital signals received from receiver mixer 10 through switch 14. Digital demodulator 20 is designed to demodulate digital signals such as, for example, pulse code modulation (PCM), time division multiple access (TDMA), code division multiple access (CDMA), extended time division multiple access (E-TDMA) and broad band code division multiple access (BCDMA) signals. The output 28 from digital demodulator 20 could consist of a digital bit stream.

The transmit circuitry of the omni-modal RF circuit will now be described in detail. Analog voice grade channel signals can be received over analog input 30 which is connected to analog modulator 22. Analog modulator 22 acts to modulate the received voice grade channel onto an intermediate frequency signal carrier. Analog modulator 22 would be capable of modulating frequency modulation (FM) or amplitude modulation (AM) signals, for example.

As can be seen in FIG. 1A, analog modulator 22 is connected to switch 16. The intermediate frequency output from analog modulator 22 on output line 42 is sent to switch 16. Switch 16 is connected to a microprocessor (not shown) in a manner similar to switch 14 described above. Switch 16 is capable of selectively connecting transmit mixer 8 to either analog modulator 22 or digital modulator 24. When switch 16 is connected to analog modulator 22 through output line 42, analog modulated signals are transmitted to transmit mixer 8.

Digital input can be received by the transmit portion of the RF modulator circuitry through digital input 32. Digital input 32 is connected to digital modulator 24 which acts to modulate the received digital data onto an intermediate frequency RF carrier. Digital modulator 24 may preferably be capable of modulating the signal into a PCM, TDMA, E-TDMA, CDMA and BCDMA format. The output 44 of digital modulator 24 is connected to switch 16. Switch 16

can be controlled through control line 40 to select the digital modulated signal on output 44 and to selectively transmit that signal to transmit mixer 8.

Transmit mixer 8 is connected to programmable local oscillator 12 which is capable of generating frequencies that cover the frequency spectrum of the desired communication systems. Transmit mixer 8 operates in a manner well known in the art to convert the intermediate frequency signal received from switch 16 to a radio frequency for transmission over a radio communication system. The output of transmit mixer 8 is connected to amplifier 6. Amplifier 6 acts to amplify the signal to insure adequate strength for the signal to be transmitted to the remote receiving station. Amplifier 6 may be connected to control circuitry to allow the power output of amplifier 6 to be varied in accordance with control signals received from the control circuitry. The output of amplifier 6 is connected to diplexer 4 and, as described above, to antenna 2.

FIG. 1B is a block schematic diagram of the input and control circuitry of omni-modal circuit 1. As can be seen from FIG. 1B, the input and control circuitry comprises speaker 100, microphone 102, voice processing circuitry 104, digital to analog converter 106, analog to digital converter 108, first selection switch 122, microprocessor 110, memory 112, data input 114, data output 116, data processing circuitry 118, second selector switch 120 and modem 124.

Microprocessor 110 is connected to memory 112 and operates to control the input circuitry as well as the programmable local oscillator 12 and switches 14 and 16 shown in FIG. 1A. Memory 112 can contain both data storage and program information for microprocessor 110. Microprocessor 110 may be any suitable microprocessor such as an Intel 80X86 or Motorola 680X0 processor. Memory 112 contains a program that allows microprocessor 110 to selectively operate the voice processing circuitry, data processing circuitry and switches to select the appropriate transmission channel for the communication signal currently being processed. In this manner, microprocessor 110 allows omni-modal circuit 1 to selectively operate on a plurality of radio communication systems.

As can be seen in FIG. 1B, an externally provided speaker 100 and microphone 102 are connected to voice processing circuitry 104. Voice processing circuitry 104 has output 142 and input 144. Voice processing output 142 is connected to switch 122. Similarly, voice processing input 144 is connected to switch 122. Switch 122, which may be an electronic analog switch, comprises two single pole double throw switches which operate in tandem to selectively connect voice output 142 and voice input 144 to appropriate data lines. Switch 122 is connected through control line 146 to microprocessor 110. Control line 146 allows microprocessor 110 to selectively operate switch 122 in response to commands received from the user or in response to a program in memory 112. In a first position, switch 122 connects voice processing input 144 to voice grade channel output 126. Referring to FIG. 1A, voice grade output 126 is connected to the output 26 of analog detector demodulator 18. In this manner, voice processing circuitry 104 is able to receive demodulated analog voice signals from analog detector demodulator 18. When voice processing input 144 is connected to 126, voice processing output 142 will be connected to voice input 130. As can be seen in FIG. 1A, voice input 130 is connected to voice grade channel input 30 of analog modulator 22. In this manner, voice processing circuitry 104 can transmit voice through the transmit circuitry of FIG. 1A.



As noted above, omni-modal circuit 1 is capable of transmitting data over a plurality of radio frequency communication systems. As can be seen in FIG. 1B, data input 114 and data output 116 are connected to data processing circuitry 118. Data input 114 allows the processing circuitry to receive data from any number of user devices. The format of the data received on data input 114 may be variable or standardized depending on the circuitry provided in data processing circuitry 118. For example, data input 114 may use a standard RS-232 serial interface to receive data from a user device. Data input 114 may also use a parallel twisted pair or HPIB interface as well. Data output 116 similarly transmits data in a format compatible with the equipment being used by the user. Data processing circuitry 118 is connected to microprocessor 110 which acts to control the formatting and conditioning of the data done by data processing circuitry 118. For example, data processing circuitry 118 may add protocol information or error correction bits to the data being received on data input 114. Conversely, data processing circuitry 118 may act to remove overhead bits such as protocol or error correction bits from the data prior to its output on data output 116. Data processing circuitry 118 is connected to switch 120 through data output 150 and data input 152. Switch 120 operates in a manner similar to that described with respect to switch 122 above. Switch 120 is connected to microprocessor 110 through control line 148. Microprocessor 110 operates to control switch 120 to selectively connect the data output 150 to either digital circuit output 140 or to modem input 156. Switch 120 also operates to connect digital data input 152 to either digital input 138 or digital modem output 154. Modem 124 may be any standard modem used to modulate digital data onto an analog voice grade channel. For example, modem 124 may incorporate a modem chip set manufactured by Rockwell International Corporation that receives digital data and modulates it into a 4 KHz band width for transmission over standard telephone systems. Modem input 156 receives data from data processing circuitry 118 through data input 152 and switch 120. The data received over modem input 156 is modulated onto a voice grade channel and output on modulated modem output 136. Modulated modem output 136 is connected to voice grade channel input 30 of analog modulator 22 shown in FIG. 1A. Similarly, digital modem output 154 receives demodulated baseband signal from modem 124. The modulated data signal is received by modem 124 from modem input 134, which is connected to voice grade channel output 26 of analog detector demodulator 18. Modem 124 acts to demodulate the data received over

As shown in FIG. 2, keypad 202 and display 204 connect through interface connector 206 to universal digital input/

The personal communicator computing circuitry 302 acts to allow the user to interface and process data in a manner

known to those of skill in the art. For example, display 304 may include an LCD display panel and may be color or black and white. Microprocessor 306 may include an Intel 80X86 microprocessor or any other microprocessor manufactured by Intel or Motorola or other computer processing chip manufacturers. Memory 308 includes random access memory (RAM) and read-only memory (ROM) necessary for the functioning of the computing device. Input device 316 may be a keyboard or a pen-based interface or other interface including voice recognition that allows for data to be input to the personal communicator computing circuitry 302. Microprocessor 306 is interfaced through data interface jack 310 to data input 114 and data output 116 of the omni-modal circuit. This allows the personal communicator computing circuitry 302 to transmit data using the omni-modal circuit 1. Also, as seen in FIG. 3, microprocessor 306 is connected through universal interface 158 to microprocessor 110 in the omni-modal circuit 1. This permits the microprocessors 306 and 110 to exchange control and operating information with each other. Should the microprocessor desire to make a data call, microprocessor 306 can instruct the microprocessor 110 shown in Figure 1B of the omni-modal circuit 1 to initiate a data call through a designated service provider. In response to such command from microprocessor 306, microprocessor 110 shown in FIG. 1B may initiate a switching action and configure the omni-modal circuit 1 to transmit data over a selected service provider. To increase the flexibility of the personal communicator computing device, an RJ-11 jack 312 is included. The RJ-11 jack is connected to the data lines from the microprocessor 306 and allows the personal communicator computing device to transmit data over a standard landline telephone.

In one particularly preferred embodiment of the invention, the omni-modal circuit 1 can transmit data over a landline telephone line using RJ-11 jack 312 and modem 124 shown in FIG. 1B. The microprocessor 306 of the personal communicator computing device would transmit data through data interface jack 310 and data input 114 to the omni-modal circuit 1. The omni-modal circuit 1, would receive the data at the data processing circuitry 118 and transmit the data through data output 150 and modem input 156 to modem 124 shown in FIG. 1B. Modem 124 would then modulate the data onto a voice grade channel and transmit the modulated data signal on modem output 154 through switch 120 and data input 152 to data processing circuitry 118. The data processing unit may then transmit the data over data output 116 and into microprocessor 306 through interface jack 310 shown in FIG. 3. The microprocessor 306 may then route the data through auxiliary data output line 314 to RJ-11 jack 312. In this manner, the personal communicator computing circuitry 302 is able to send data over standard landline telephone lines without the use of a second additional modem. The modem in the omni-modal circuit 1 serves two functions allowing the personal communicator user to send data through his standard landline wall jack or over a wireless network depending on the availability of each at the time the user desires to send the data.

Also shown in FIG. 3 is handset 318. In the preferred embodiment of the personal communicator, the speaker 100 and microphone 102 would be embodied in a separate handset 318. This handset 318 would connect to the omni-modal circuit 1 through an appropriate interface connection.

FIGS. 4A and 4B depict a communication device 402 employing the omni-modal circuit 1 of the present invention, and having an integrated display device for con-

veying information to a user. FIG. 4A shows the front of the communication device 402 that could serve as a cellular phone. The device 402 includes speaker 100, antenna 2, microphone 102 and key pad buttons 406. In this regard, the external features of the device are similar to those of a standard commercially available cellular phone. As shown in FIG. 4B, the device is unique in that it incorporates an expanded display 404 and control buttons 408, 410, 412 for the display of information to the user. For example, the display 404 could convey airline flight information to the user while they are connected with an airline representative. In response to a user request, the airline representative could transmit flight information to the user's communication device 402, which would then display this information on the display 404. The user could then cycle through the information using increment button 408 and decrement button 410. When the user desired to select a given flight, they could indicate assent by pressing the enter button 412. This information would then be transmitted digitally to the airline representative's computer.

The capabilities of the omni-modal circuit 1 facilitate its use in a device as shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B. Since the device is programmable through the use of microprocessor 110 and memory 112 (FIG. 1B), it is capable of switching between voice and data modes of operation. This allows the user to conduct a voice conversation and then to receive data for display on the integrated display device. Alternatively, the omni-modal circuit could access another communication service to receive data for display, or it might receive data over a subchannel during the conversation. This would be particularly advantageous if the user desired to continue a voice call while continuing to receive data information, as in the case of the airline flight selection example given above.

Referring next to FIG. 5, a block schematic diagram of a telephone/pager device using the omni-modal circuit 1 is shown. As can be seen from FIG. 5, the telephone/pager device includes keypad 502, display 504 and control circuitry 506. The keypad 502 is connected to control circuitry 506. Display 504 is also connected to control circuitry 506. Control circuitry 506 is further connected through universal digital input/output interface 158 to the microprocessor 110 of the omni-modal circuit shown in FIG. 1B.

The combination telephone/pager device shown in FIG. 5 is generally similar in design to the advanced cellular telephone shown in FIG. 2. One particularly advantageous aspect of the omni-modal circuit 1 is its ability to provide a great degree of flexibility in the design and implementation of communication circuits. For different implementations external to the omni-modal circuit, the memory 112 shown in FIG. 1B can be reprogrammed to provide different functions through microprocessor 110 for the universal digital interface 158.

In FIG. 5, the telephone/pager implementation includes control circuitry 506 which receives information through the universal digital interface 158 from microprocessor 110. The control circuitry can then determine whether or not a page signal has been received by the omni-modal circuit 1 and if so it can display the appropriate information on display 504. If, however, control circuitry 506 receives information from microprocessor 110 that a telephone call has been received or is being used, then control circuitry 506 can appropriately display the telephone information on display 504. Similarly, control circuitry 506 can receive information from keypad 502 and selectively process this information depending on the current mode of operation. For example, if the device shown in FIG. 5 is in pager mode, control circuitry 506 may allow keypad input to cycle through stored paging messages.

If however, the device shown in FIG. 5 is in telephone mode, control circuitry 506 may process the keypad information received from keypad 502 as telephone commands and transmit control signals through interface 158 to microprocessor 110 to cause a telephone call to be placed. Further, control circuitry 506 can actuate alarm 508 which may be a audible alarm such as a beeping or a vibration generator. Alarm 508 serves to notify the user when a telephone call or page is received.

FIG. 6A is a block schematic diagram of a dual mode cellular/cordless landline telephone is disclosed. The dual mode device includes key pad 602, optional display 604, handset 606, and interface connector 608. The key pad 602 and optional display 604 are connected to microprocessor 110 (FIG. 1B) through interface connector 608 and universal digital interface 158.

Key pad 602 allows a user to provide information to microprocessor 110 for operating the dual mode device. For example, the user may operate the key pad to indicate that a certain call should be made on the cordless telephone network and not on the cellular network. To the contrary, the user may specify that the cellular network was to be used by operating the key pad 602 to so indicate.

One particularly preferred embodiment of a dual mode device may be programmed to allow for automatic selection of either a cellular communications network or a cordless telephone landline network. This is particularly advantageous in that a cordless telephone landline network is often considerably cheaper to access than is a cellular telephone network. Therefore, if the device will automatically access a cordless telephone network whenever one available, and use the cellular network only we absolutely necessary, the user can achieve substantial savings while still having a single, portable, communications unit that operates over a large geographic area. If the user requests service while within his home, for example, the cordless telephone system would be used and the user would be charged a minimal amount. If the user were to place a call while away from his home a greater charge would be incurred. The user, however, would use the same communications equipment regardless of where the service was used, and the service selection would appear transparent to the user.

FIG. 6B is a flowchart of one method that may be used to implement this embodiment. The process of FIG. 6B begins by determining if the user has activated the device to request communications services 652. If the user has not requested communication services, the devices continues to check for a user request. If a user request is detected, the device then determines, if it is within range of a cordless telephone landline system 654. If the device is within range of a cordless telephone landline system, then the device services the user's request using the cordless landline communication system 662 and the process terminates 664. If the device is not within range of a cordless landline network, then the device determines if it is within the service range of a cellular phone system 656. If the device is within range, the user's request is serviced using the cellular phone system 660 and the process terminates 664. If the device is not within range of a cellular system, then the device issues an alert to the user to indicate that no service is available 658 and the process terminates 664.

Although FIG. 6A and the above discussion focus on a dual mode cellular/cordless landline telephone, it should be understood that the a device in accordance with the present invention may include the ability to access additional communication systems. For example, it may be desirable to

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have a device substantially as shown in FIG. 6A, but having the ability to access a personal communication service (PCS) network in addition to the cellular and cordless landline systems. This would allow the user to achieve further cost savings while seamlessly moving throughout a given geographic area.

Referring next to FIG. 7, a block schematic diagram of a personal computer 702 incorporating an omni-modal circuit 1 is shown. As can be seen in FIG. 7, computer 702 includes antennae 2 and an interface port 704 that allows for a integrated circuit card to be inserted into the computer. As shown in FIG. 7, the interface port 704 has installed therein a removable card 701 comprising an omni-modal circuit 1. The omni-modal radio communications card 701 includes connector 706, which may include data input 114, data output 116 and universal digital interface 158 shown in FIG. 1B. This connector allows the omni-modal radio interface card 701 to communicate with the computer through a corresponding mating connector 708 inside the personal communicator. This allows the microprocessor 110 on the omni-modal radio communications card 701 to communicate with the memory and microprocessor contained in the computer 702. In a preferred embodiment, the omni-modal radio communications card 701 is in the form of a PCMCIA card adapted to interface into a standard slot in a portable or other computing device. FIG. 7 also shows an optional telephone handset 710 which may be interfaced to the radio communication interface card 701. Optional handset 710 includes speaker 100 and microphone 102, and serves to allow for voice communication over radio network service providers that provide such capability.

The omni-modal radio communication card 701 also has an external RJ-11 data jack 712. The external RJ-11 data jack 712 allows omni-modal communications card 701 to transmit data over a telephone landline circuit using a common RJ-11 interface cable. Omni-modal communications card 701 includes a modem 124 in FIG. 1B for modulating digital data onto a voice grade channel suitable for transmission over a landline telephone connection.

Therefore, the radio communications card 701 serves as a modem to the personal computer and a separate modem card or external modem is not necessary in order to transmit data over a landline jack. The microprocessor 110 in the omni-modal circuit card 701 allows the circuitry to select either landline transmission via external RJ-11 jack 712 or cellular radio transmission through antennae 2. This may be accomplished for example through an analog switch circuit as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,972,457, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIG. 8 is a block schematic diagram of a special purpose radio data transmitting device 801 that is implemented using the omni-modal circuit. It is often desirable to be able to construct a device that will be capable of operating to send data wirelessly. For example, it may be desirable to include such a device in a vending machine or gasoline pump. Device 801 may then relay data at a predetermined time concerning the amount of consumables (e.g. food, beverages, gasoline, etc.) still remaining in stock. In this manner, it is not necessary to have a person physically inspect the device and evaluate the remaining stock, which would be considerably more expensive.

The omni-modal circuit 1 of the present invention can be used to implement a system as described above. Referring to FIG. 8, the omni-modal circuit 1 is connected to a data source 802 through data lines 806 comprising data input line 114 and data output line 116. Additionally, microprocessor

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110 (FIG. 1B) is connected to the data source through universal digital interface 158 and control line 804. The resulting omni-modal device 801 can be programmed to access a selected communications service at a periodic interval and to transmit data from the data source at that time. This function can be included in the library of functions available on circuit 1. After accessing the communications service, microprocessor 110 may instruct data source 802 using control line 804 to transmit data over data lines 806. Of course, the omni-modal device 801 will have the circuits necessary to use a plurality of different transmission networks. However, because of mass production and the availability of predetermined designs it may be desirable to use the standard building block circuit 1 to implement limited-purpose devices which will be used with only one or two systems, even though these limited purpose devices will use only a portion of the built-in capabilities of circuit 1.

In addition to functions directly related to radio communications and modulation, the library may desirably include other functions which enable desirable computing features. For example, data displaying, electronic mail storage, retrieval, and composition, and other computing functions may be included in the library. In addition, if a high powered processor is provided, the library may be expanded to include substantial operating system functions so that circuit 1 can be used to construct full-fledged personal computers and personal communicators capable of running third party applications programs.

As described above, circuit 1 will be capable of utilizing any one of the wireless data services within a given geographic area. The selection of the service to be used can be made manually by the user, or can be selected automatically. Referring to FIG. 9, circuit 1 may have a preprogrammed routine for selecting information carriers based on varying criteria. As shown in FIG. 9, the criteria for selecting a carrier may be varied by the user. Possible criteria include the cost of sending a data message; quality of transmission link (signal strength, interference actual or potential); available bandwidth on a carrier for data transmission (or transmission speed supported); potential for being bumped off the system or having transmissions delayed (that is, is the service provider at nearly full capacity); security of transmission; or other special criteria which the user or the device may establish based on the user's individual priorities. As another example, the length of a data message to be transmitted may be considered as a factor in selecting the carrier. If the length of the proposed message is made known to circuit 1, this information can be used in conjunction with pricing information to determine the lowest cost route. For example, for very short messages a paging service or cellular digital packet data (CDPD) service might be selected. For longer messages, such as fax or data file transmission, a circuit switched connection with high speed data transfer capacity (such as AMPS cellular) may be more cost-effective.

Information about the costs and services offered by carriers in the area will be made available to the omni-modal circuit 1 for use in this competitive selection process, either through pre-programming by the user or selling organization or by transmission of the information in a manner described elsewhere herein.

The carrier may be selected by any one of the characteristics of the available competing carriers. For example, a given user may be price sensitive, and wish to always employ the lowest cost transmission method. Another user may have time-critical communications needs (e.g. securities trading or news reporting) and may prefer the most reliable or the highest speed transfer regardless of price.

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In determining the cost of a particular transmission, circuit 1 preferably first determines the type and quantity of data to be transmitted. For example, if the user has selected a function of transmitting a file or an electronic mail message, circuit 1 will determine the length of the message, and file. This information is then used in determining the projected cost of transmitting the data on each system. For example, for a short E-mail message, the expected cost for an AMPS cellular system will be the cost of making a one-minute call. For a packet radio system, the expected cost will be the length of the message divided by the number of characters per packet, times the cost per packet. As long as the basis for carrier charges is provided to circuit 1, the cost factors relevant for any particular message can be calculated. Thus, circuit 1 can intelligently predict relative costs of transmitting over various networks and can operate with a low-cost preference dependent on characteristics of an individual message. Different low-cost transmission modes are appropriately selected for messages having different characteristics.

A more sophisticated approach than pure low-cost selection allows the user to assign weights to different competitive factors (price, signal clarity, transmission speed or other factors) depending on the individual preferences and needs of the user. Based on the assigned weights, the circuit then calculates a "score" for each available system and selects the system with the highest score. As an example, a user may instruct the circuit to select carriers based 60% on the ratio of the lowest price to the price of the particular carrier and 40% on normalized signal strength. If the cost to send the message on System I is \$0.50 (signal strength 2), the cost on System II is \$0.60 (signal strength 4), the cost on System III is \$0.85 (signal strength 5) and the cost on System IV is \$0.50 (signal strength 1) circuit 1 would calculate scores of:

$$\text{System I: } 0.60(0.50/0.50)+0.40(2/5)=0.76$$

$$\text{System II: } 0.60(0.50/0.60)+0.40(4/5)=0.82$$

$$\text{System III: } 0.60(0.50/0.85)+0.40(5/5)=0.75$$

$$\text{System IV: } 0.60(0.50/0.50)+0.40(1/5)=0.68$$

so System II would be selected. With the same systems available, if the user preferred a selection based 80% on cost and only 20% on signal quality, the scores would be

$$\text{System I: } 0.80(0.50/0.50)+0.20(2/5)=0.88$$

$$\text{System II: } 0.80(0.50/0.60)+0.20(4/5)=0.83$$

$$\text{System III: } 0.80(0.50/0.85)+0.20(5/5)=0.67$$

$$\text{System IV: } 0.80(0.50/0.50)+0.20(1/5)=0.84$$

and System I would be selected. Of course, the application of this weighted selection criteria is not limited to, and is not necessarily based on, price and signal strength. Any number of criteria, including these or others, can be considered in a formula to meet the individual user's needs. The criteria for a particular user are stored in a user profile in the memory of circuit 1. Preferably, a default user profile corresponding to the preferences of a large number of users is established. Then, the individual user can change his or her user profile to establish different selection parameters and preferences at any time through appropriate input to circuit 1.

Particularly desirable selection algorithms may also take multiple factors into account by employing branching algorithms to select the carrier. For example, one multistage selection process based on multiple criteria would operate as follows. Initially, systems which are incapable of performing the desired function would be eliminated from consideration. For example, if the user wants to place a voice call, data-only systems would not be considered. As another example, if the user wants to send a fax to a customer and a given network has no capability of transmitting fax infor-

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mation to a specified telephone number. that system would not be considered for the proposed task. Next, among the systems available, circuit 1 may predict the lowest cost route based on a formula accounting for the message length and the costs of the available systems, including consideration of any long-distance surcharges implied by the destination of the information transfer. Finally, users may also prefer that circuit 1 automatically avoid selecting carriers which are suffering performance degradations because of capacity limits, or which have a particularly weak signal at the location of the user. In this way, if the carrier which would otherwise be preferred will not be able to provide a fast, accurate information transfer at the time from the user's location, the carrier that is the "next best" according to the primary programmed selection criteria (cost in this example) may be automatically selected. A tradeoff between signal quality and cost may also be arbitrated by the weighting method described above.

Preferably, any one or combination of the above selection criteria is available in the circuit 1 and the selection criteria can be selected, programmed, changed or overridden by the user. Adaptive service provider selection may be implemented based on user experience. That is, the information transmission track record of circuit 1 with a particular service provider (e.g. error rate, dropped connections, transmission time) can be stored and updated, and this information can be used as a weighted factor in selecting service providers. In this way, service providers providing poor services can be avoided in cases where more desirable alternatives are available.

The market and consumer implications of the present invention are substantial, in that the circuits and methods of the present invention tend to introduce intense competition for customers among various wireless carriers. The present invention automatically identifies service providers that best meet the user's performance requirements. In this way, service providers that meet the varying demands of the most user will have a large market share and maintain full usage of their available frequency spectrum. The invention therefore allows the users to drive the market by creating price and service competition among carriers.

In addition, the omni-modal capability of the present invention facilitates a free market for the use of frequency spectrum. Circuit 1 can be activated to select a specified channel frequency, but may be activated to use command, control, and data protocols on that channel that are normally appropriate for different channels, if the carrier controlling the frequency has authorized another carrier to temporarily use the first carrier's channel. As an example, a local AMPS cellular telephone carrier may have open channels, which may be temporarily "rented" to a Specialized Mobile Radio (SMR) carrier which is experiencing heavy traffic on its assigned channels. The SMR carrier may then direct persons requesting SMR service to operate on the "rented" channel, but using SMR protocols rather than the AMPS protocols which would normally be appropriate to that channel. This method of operation maximizes the efficient use of available frequencies by allowing carriers to shrink and expand the number of channels available based on current demand. During rush hours, when AMPS traffic is high, additional channels might be reallocated to AMPS by market forces; that is, the AMPS carrier will rent additional channels from under-utilized carriers to provide the services desired by the public at that time. At other times, demand for other systems may increase, and AMPS or other carriers may rent their under-utilized bandwidth to carriers having a substantial demand. This might occur, for example, if a network pro-

One method in which system information could be distributed to users is shown in FIG. 10. The process starts 1002 by contacting a selected service provider 1004. The service

provider provides information to a central location as discussed above. Once the information for the first selected service provider is complete, the process determines if other service providers exist 1008. If other providers exist, the process 1004 and 1006 is repeated for each additional service provider. When service information is compiled for all service providers, the process compiles and formats the information into a standard reporting form the is understandable to all mobile units 1010. The process then determines the proper modulating frequency and protocol for the desired geographic area 1012 and broadcasts this information to all mobile users on the selected frequency and using the selected protocol 1014. Once the information has been broadcast to the users, the process ends 1016.

Referring next to FIG. 11, a flowchart showing a handshake sequence for arranging information transmission using the omni-modal circuit 1 of the present invention is shown. The process begins 1102 with the omni-modal circuit 1 accessing a service provider 1104 and receiving carrier cost information from the service provider 1106. The omni-modal circuit 1 may also receive additional information from the service provider such as signal quality, system resources, and available bandwidth. The circuit 1 then stores the information received from the service provider 1108. The circuit determines if other service providers exist 1110 and, if they do, repeats the above steps to acquire cost and availability information for each service within the omni-modal circuit's range.

Once information has been acquired for all available service providers, the information is evaluated 1112. This evaluation could consist of a simple determination based on a single factor, or could include more complex calculations relating to weighting of given factors and qualities. The results of the evaluation are used to select a service provider to process the users pending request for services. A connection is established 1114 on the selected service provider, and the user's request is processed, after which the process ends 1116.

FIG. 12 is a view of a cellular radiotelephone 1200 which is generally of the type and configuration described above with reference to FIG. 2. However, radiotelephone 1200 is constructed using a modular omni-modal circuit 1 constructed on a removable card 1204 which is provided with a standardized connector or connector (for example, a PCM-CIA connector) 1205 to establish all necessary interface connections to a plurality of receiving devices in the manner described above with reference to FIG. 7.

As can be seen in FIG. 12, a telephone shell 1202 containing a battery power supply, microphone, speaker, keypad, and antenna 2 has a receiving slot 1206 for receiving card 1204 carrying circuit 1. When card 1204 is installed in telephone shell 1202, connector 1205 mates with connector 1208 within slot 1206 and the external components of the shell 1202 are operatively combined with card 1204 to create a functional multi-modal cellular telephone.

FIG. 13 illustrates the installation of the same card 1204 in a notebook sized computer 1302, whereby the computer 1302 is provided with complete omni-modal network access. By using the same card 1204 containing standardized circuit 1 to provide radio network access for various devices, the user can avoid maintaining multiple accounts or telephone numbers, yet can communicate by radio using many devices. For example, a receiving slot for card 1204 could be provided in the user's automobile, and insertion of card 1204 upon entering the car would activate cellular communications capability in the car. The same card 1204 can be readily transferred between the car, a portable handset

shell as shown in FIG. 12. and a computer as shown in FIG. 13 for data transmission.

The omni-modal circuit of the present invention can perform both page receiving and other functions, such as placing cellular telephone calls. However, since only a single transmitting and receiving circuit is provided, when the device is in use on a non-paging communications network such as an AMPS cellular telephone system, any pages directed to the device may not be received. The present invention provides a solution to this potential problem in which the paging system control is interconnected with other network(s) such as the local AMPS cellular system. It should be understood that while connection of the pager system to the AMPS system is shown as an example, such connections may be provided between any systems used by the omni-modal circuit 1 to achieve similar objectives.

FIG. 14 is a block schematic diagram of a paging relay system according to the present invention for use with omni-modal circuits 1 that support pager functions and also a non-pager network function such as cellular telephone operation. FIG. 14 shows a paging system 1400 which is connected in a conventional manner by lines 1406 to a broadcast antenna 1408 which transmits pager signals to pager devices such as the omni-modal circuit 1 shown in the Figure. In addition, FIG. 14 shows a cellular telephone network office 1402 which is connected to control the operation of the cellular telephone cell site transmitter 1412 by lines 1410.

Significantly, the paging system 1400 is connected to the cellular telephone network office 1402 by lines 1404 which permit transfer of operational and control information between the paging system 1400 and cellular telephone network office 1402. Because of the connection of lines 1404, the paging system can determine whether the omni-modal device 1 is engaged in a cellular call and will thus be unable to receive a page.

FIG. 15 is a flowchart showing a preferred operation of the pager and other (for example AMPS) systems interconnected as described with reference to FIG. 14. In block 1502, the pager system first determines by reference to stored records whether the pager device which is to be contacted is an omni-modal circuit 1 which may be engaged in data transmission with another system at the time of any given page. If not, the page can be sent by the usual broadcast method in block 1504. If an omni-modal circuit 1 is involved in the paging operation, the pager system then contacts any connected networks which might be in use by omni-modal device 1 and inquires whether the device is in fact using such networks in block 1506. If not, the omni-modal device is presumed to be available for receiving a page and control transfers to block 1504 for transmission of the page by conventional methods. If circuit 1 is in use, the pager system determines whether delivery by the alternate network may be accomplished in block 1508. This may be determined by appropriate factors, including whether the network (e.g. AMPS) is capable of and willing to deliver the page information to circuit 1, and whether the user of circuit 1 has subscribed to this service.

If delivery by the alternate network is not available, control transfers to block 1510 which imposes a time delay. The page information is stored, and after some appropriate period of time, control transfers to block 1506 and the pager system again attempts to determine whether the page can be transmitted by conventional means.

If the alternative network is able to deliver the page and this service is to be provided, control transfers from block